Primary school websites in Ireland: how are they used to inform and involve parents?

# Details

## DOI

10.1080/03323315.2018.1498366

## Issued

2018

## Language

English

## Volume

37

## Issue

4

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Irish Educational Studies

## Publisher

Informa UK Limited

## Topics

Learning

## Sample

A representative sample of 150 Irish primary schools was randomly selected to participate in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study2 (PIRLS) 2016 from which a sub-sample of 100 schools was included in this analysis.

## Implications For Parents About

## Implications For Educators About

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Other

## Other Stakeholder Implication

Professionals

# Abstract

Online sources are increasingly the most likely starting place when seeking information about any topic. Parents of prospective students may access school websites in advance of enrolling their child. Parents of current students are likely to access a school’s website for information about the school’s current activities or to learn more about the teaching and learning taking place in their child’s classroom. With a few notable exceptions, there is limited research on the quality of school websites internationally, particularly at primary level. For this paper, the online presence of 100 Irish primary schools was examined. Of the 90 schools for whom some web presence was established, information provided to parents of current students and parents of prospective students was examined. Findings show that primary school websites do not comprehensively address the information needs of either group of parents and highlight areas of potential improvement.

# Outcome

In relation to the two aims of this research, our analyses show that (1) school websites provided relatively little information for prospective parents and (2) most schools made limited use of websites for communicating with parents and the school community.

The study finds out that parents (especially in rural areas) traditionally tended to enrol their children in the nearest primary school, so may not have sought extensive information about schools. This may have contributed to schools’ limited provision of online information, and a failure to recognise that parents of prospective pupils need certain information.

Schools use variety of criteria to offers places. In principle, criteria must be outlined "in the enrolment/admissions policy, which parents can use to – among other things – gauge likelihood of their child being admitted". Despite this, admissions policies were available on just under half of websites.
"In the absence of an admissions policy, most parents are aware that schools are entitled to use a child’s religion as the main criterion in awarding places. However, religion was not specified on about one-in-eight websites, while gender composition – another important factor that informs school choice – was not apparent for about one-fifth of schools. As such, many websites did not provide information that parents would need when choosing a school"